

Divine Power and Anger Displayed in Earthquakes

A sermon occasioned by the late earthquake, In New-England, November 18, 1755.
And preached, the next Lord's-Day, at Point-Shirley.

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Ezekiel 27: 2, 3, 28

“O Thou that art situate at the entry of the sea ... Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, Thy builders have perfected thy beauty ... The suburbs shall shake at the sound”

Isaiah 41: 5

“The isles saw it, and feared, the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.”

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Jeremiah 10:10

— *At his wrath the earth shall tremble.* —

The awful and unusual providence of God in the week past, in which he has visited us with a remarkable earthquake, has been the occasion of my selecting the words before us, for the meditation at this time. If we should neglect to take a proper notice, or to make a suitable improvement of an event of this kind, we should undoubtedly act against the light of nature, the first principles, and most evident dictates of reason. Even these could teach Jonah's mariners in a tempest, every one to arise and call upon his God: though they were heathen, unenlightened by revelation, strangers to the covenant of promise, and aliens from the common-wealth of Israel. They who dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid of his tokens. Certainly therefore our guilt and punishment would be enhanced and aggravated, if we should omit this natural duty in a case of equal distress and danger; if we should incur the character of those who regard not the works of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. We call ourselves Christians, we profess the true religion, and enjoy the means of grace, the oracles and ordinances of God in their utmost purity and perfection: it may justly therefore be expected that we should do more than others who are not favored with the like advantages, that we should be more serious and circumspect in our behavior on such an occasion; more frequent and fervent in our addresses at the throne of grace, more careful and critical in our enquiries into the grounds of the divine displeasure, and wherefore our God is thus contending with us.

The God of patience is yet waiting to be gracious; he is loath to strike the fatal blow, to overwhelm us in universal and unavoidable destruction. He has thoughts of pity towards us; his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together: how shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How

shall I set thee as Zeboim? We may yet be reconciled to him in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the great and only mediator: but if thus having space to repent, we yet repent not, we shall find that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If we despise the riches of divine goodness, forbearance and long-suffering; there will be nothing before us but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. He will again visit us with an earthquake, or with some other desolating judgment; he has other judgments in store, other arrows in his quiver: and verily, it will then be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah than for us. After our hard and impenitent heart, we shall treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. “At his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.”

In handling the words, I propose to consider two propositions which are evidently implied in them, and which may make way for the enquiry, what improvement we are to make of the awful providence in the week past. — *At his wrath the earth shall tremble.* — This teaches us that an earthquake is a work of almighty power, and a token of divine anger.

I. An earthquake is a work of almighty power.

No doubt natural causes may be assigned for this phenomenon. An imprisoned vapor too closely pent, or too strongly compressed in the caverns beneath, will, through a natural elasticity, abhor confinement, dilate and expand, swell and heave up the surface of the earth, producing a tremor and commotion, till it either finds vent, or, from some other cause, it is smothered, and its violence abated. Could we look into the vaults below, over which we now walk without fear, and in so much seeming security, to see the tremendous apparatus there: in some places, immense tracts of sulphureous and combustible materials that lie buried, and wait for nothing but a single spark to tear all before them in a sudden and irresistible explosion; in others, how thin the arch which interposes between us and a furnace of flame, which curls up against it, wafts it away, causes it to grow thinner and thinner, and less able to support us: should we not shudder at such a prospect, when the imagination of it fills us with so much horror and amazement! And yet this is very probably the state and condition of our globe at present. It has a natural tendency to a final conflagration. It is kept in store and reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. And that same disposition of things which fits it for this catastrophe, renders it also liable to earthquakes,

But we must not imagine from hence, that an earthquake, because it may be accounted for on philosophical principles, is a casual event, or that some chance has happened unto us. It is God at work, though he works by the intervention of second causes. Though it is no miracle, it is the effect of almighty power: this is frequently declared in the sacred pages: nay this is taken for granted in the context as an indisputable point; and Jehovah proves himself to be the only true God, in opposition to all the idols of the heathen, from this very argument,

The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting king; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. (Jeremiah 10:10)

How often do we find this wonderful and terrible work ascribed to God in the holy scriptures? He looketh on the earth and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills and they smoke. At his command a volcano is lifted up to the universal terror and consternation of the guilty inhabitants round it. Deep groans the affrighted earth, at his presence; and the awful sound is reverberated from cavern to cavern through all its most intricate, gloomy and profound recesses. The whole continent shivers and quakes to its remotest foundations; the pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.

The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
(Psalm 29: 8)

[and]

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world, the earth saw, trembled and shook. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. (Psalm 92: 4)

How exalted and sublime these glowing periods of inspiration, in which the shaking of the earth is expressly asserted to be a work of almighty power!

When the glorious God has, upon particular occasions, made a miraculous descent upon our earth, he has frequently been attended with an earthquake, as one of the tokens of his special presence. So at the promulgation of the law, in all its terrors, to the attending tribes,

Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.
(Exodus 19: 29)

We have another description of this memorable event in the song of Deborah and Barak;

Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marched out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel. (Judges 5: 4)

So also the psalmist, it is probable in allusion to this, expresses himself with eloquence more than mortal,

When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fled? Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains that ye skipped like rams! And ye little hills like lambs? Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob. (Psalm 94: 1)

When God afterwards appeared to Elijah in the same place, it was with the same terrible circumstances. An earthquake was his attendant.

Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and break in pieces the rocks before the Lord, and after the wind an earthquake. (1 Kings 19: 11)

This may suffice to illustrate the first thing proposed, that an earthquake, though it may be accounted for on natural principles, is notwithstanding the work of almighty power. The Supreme Being first appointed and regulated the laws of nature, with infinite wisdom and uncontrollable sovereignty. He over-rules them all, suspends or alters them

as he pleases. He does his pleasure among the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of the earth beneath; none can stay his hand, control his counsels, disappoint his purposes, or say unto him, What doest thou? He formed our globe of such a constitution as to be liable to earthquakes. And he produces them at such times, in such places, and in such degrees of violence and severity, as are most for his glory, and best calculated to accomplish the designs of his providence, in the government of the natural and the moral world. We proceed to say,

II. An earthquake is not only the effect of Almighty power, but a token of divine wrath.

— *At his wrath the earth shall tremble* —

This will evidently appear if we consult the sacred history. To go as far back as the days of Noah; when God saw the wickedness of man that it was great upon the earth, his anger was kindled, and he overwhelmed it with a flood of waters. The foundations of the great deep were broken up; which no doubt was attended with horrible concussion, then the windows from on high were opened, and the foundations of the earth were shaken. the waters roared and were troubled, the mountains shook with the swelling thereof. So when God descended in the fierceness of his anger to destroy Sodom and the other guilty cities which were sprinkled over the plain, an earthquake was employed upon this occasion: while at the same time fire and brimstone showers impetuous from heaven, deluges the valley, and completes the ruin.

Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. (Genesis 19: 54)

This was the punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, when they laid an impious claim to the employment, the honors and the privileges of the priesthood, which God had confined to the family of Aaron. The anger of God was kindled against them for their presumptuous and sacrilegious attempt. At his wrath the earth trembled, and the bold conspirators were hurled headlong, plunged promiscuous and precipitant into the hideous vaults below. Down they sunk, as they were in the very act to sacrifice, and insolently withstood Moses in the view and at the head of the rebel congregation. Let us turn to the account, as it is transmitted to us in the oracles of inspiration:

And Moses said, hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works: for I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them, fled at the cry of them; for they said, Let the earth swallow us up also. (Numbers 16: 28)

So also when the Philistines invaded the land of Israel in the days of Saul, God appeared for the deliverance of his people, and the confusion of their enemies. He resented their unreasonable and unrighteous encroachments, struck a panic into them, and destroyed them by means of an earthquake.

And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a great trembling. And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and behold the multitude melted away; and they went on beating down one another. (1 Samuel 14: 15-16)

Once more, when the glorious God would in the most effectual manner testify his anger against the most enormous and execrable crime that ever was committed in our world, he did by an earthquake. At the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we read particularly,

That the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. (Matthew 27: 51)

Thus we see that an earthquake is to be looked upon as a token of divine anger, since it appears, from the sacred pages, that the sins of a people have been frequently punished by this most terrible judgment. Thus the psalmist,

Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. (Psalm 18: 7)

How often do we find this judgment denounced by the prophets, against a degenerate and sinful people!

Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. And I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. (Isaiah 13: 11)

[and]

Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and with great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. (Isaiah 29: 6)

[and]

This people is foolish, they have not known me, they are foolish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth; and lo, it was without form and void, and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo there was no man, and all the birds of the heaven were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. (Jeremiah 4: 22)

[and]

In my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, surely there shall be a great shaking in the land, so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. (Ezekiel 38: 14)

[and]

Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand. ... The earth shall quake, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. (Joel 2: 1, 10)

Upon the whole then, it evidently appears, from what we have heard, that an earthquake is not only an effect of almighty power, but a token of divine anger. It is a judgment upon a land, and it is to be looked upon as such. God threatens it as such against a sinful and degenerate people: and in this manner he has in fact frequently testified his anger against sin, and executed his purposes against the sinner. It certainly follows, that whenever a people are thus visited, they should acknowledge the mighty hand of God, and humble themselves under it; they should know the rod, and who hath appointed it. Some of the lessons it is expected we should learn from a providence of this nature, and some of the tempers it should produce in us, agreeable to what we have heard at this time, I propose at present to mention.

1. Is it as we have heard, is an earthquake the work of God? This should give us awful ideas and suitable apprehensions of the divine majesty, and the necessity we stand in of his favor.

Shall not his dread fall upon us, and his excellency make us afraid? Shall not our flesh tremble for fear of him, shall we not be afraid of his judgments? Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, will ye not tremble at my presence?

The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim, Let the earth be moved. (Psalm 99: 1)

What little and contemptible creatures are we in his sight? Behold the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing: he shakes the mountains in his anger; he heaves the solid earth from its basis.

What are all the magnificent structures of art, or stupendous labors of men, before that God, who when he pleases, can tear them from their foundation, or plunge them into the gaping abyss? What is all the pomp and grandeur of the most magnificent earthly monarch, to that divine description of the prophet?

God came from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations, and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lift up his hands on high. (Habakkuk 3: 3, 6, 7, 10)

So also at the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, when he triumphed over death and the grave, and led captivity captive,

Behold there was a great earthquake. (Matthew 28: 2)

Shall we not, from what we have heard, endeavor after that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and which will render us cautious how we offend him? He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? He removeth the mountains, and they know not; who overturneth them in his anger. Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Of what infinite consequence and importance is it, that we have this God for our friend, that we acquaint ourselves with him, and be at peace. This will support us, give us a presence of mind, a courage, and a dignity, amidst all the convulsions of the earth, the ruins of dissolving of nature. How gloriously animating is that sublime rapture of the psalmist!

God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. ... The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46:1)

The man who has the testimony of a good conscience, and who is sensible that his maker loves him; who sees God in Christ reconciling him to himself, accepting him as righteous, and not imputing his trespasses to him; O, with what sacred serenity and triumph, may he view these terrible works of God, and survey the desolations which he has made in the earth! And these are the only principles that will support and abide by us in an earthquake, when the gay infidel, the licentious libertine, and the bold blasphemer, forget their wonted mirth and frenzy, and tremble in the near views of a miserable eternity. Where can we fly for refuge, but to God our maker, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the great and only mediator? Who else will be able to protect us in the day of the Lord's anger, when the earth shall tremble at his wrath? This leads me to say,

2. Is it as we have heard; this should teach us the vanity of all confidence in the creature, and the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments.

Let us not put our confidence in an arm of flesh. Let us cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of — man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm. What defense can we expect here, when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth? On what creature can we depend with success, when even the ground, on which we tread, is not able to support us?

Where can we meet with a lasting possession, when our very lands, which one would think would bid the fairest for it of anything here below, when even these are liable to be sunk in an earthquake, and their place no more to be found? How great the folly of those who place their supreme felicity in the possessions and acquirements of a vain earth! Who heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay! Who say to gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence! Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. O the deceitfulness of riches! What is it that thus enchants and infatuates the generality of mankind, for the obtaining of which, they toil and labor, sacrifice all their ease here, and frequently forego all their hopes of happiness

hereafter? Uncertain riches, which may make themselves wings, and flee away as the eagles towards heaven, or which may be suddenly overthrown by an earthquake, and buried deep in the subterranean vaults, never more to see the light, till they are illuminated by the flames of the last conflagration. Let not the rich man then glory in his riches, for he that trusteth in his riches shall fall. God shall destroy thee for ever: he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. The righteous also shall see and laugh at him. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches! They profit not in the day of wrath, when the foundations of the earth tremble. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for his soul. So at the destruction of Babylon, by an earthquake, the merchants of the earth are represented as utterly unable to help her, and as lamenting over her in all the dismal accents of despair:

The merchants, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing. And saying, alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls: for in one hour so great riches is come to nought! (Revelation 18: 15)

Seeing then we have here no continuing city, shall we not be exhorted to seek another, which is an heavenly, to lay up treasure in heaven, and to seek after the true riches, even durable riches and righteousness, those things which remain, for they cannot be shaken: that we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of our inheritance among the saints, even that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us?

3. What we have heard teaches us the evil of sin, with the necessity of sincere repentance, and thorough reformation.

We are a sinful and degenerate people, and the love of many waxes cold. Where is the Lord God of Elijah, the spirit that animated our pious predecessors? Where is that exemplary, strict and uniform devotion, that flaming zeal for God and religion, which once so remarkably adorned and distinguished this people? This, which was our glory, is in a great measure departed from us. We need to be shaken out of our sleep, to be roused out of our lethargy, our supine indolence, our carelessness and carnal security. This no doubt was the design of the alarming providence in the week past. We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. The voice of God to us was as that of the mariners to Jonah:

What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God; if so be, that God will think upon us, that we perish not. (Jonah 1: 6)

The voice of God to us was as that to the church of Ephesus:

Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, lest I come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place. (Revelation 2: 5)

It was a terrible night, the most so, perhaps, that ever New-England saw. When we remember it, we are afraid, and trembling taketh hold of our flesh. And it was sin that provoked God to appear against us in so awful a manner; and the land to tremble and

sorrow. — *At his wrath the earth trembled.* — Shall not the land tremble for this; and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? God might justly have overwhelmed us in the fierceness of his anger, have crushed us in our beds, or buried us in the bowels of the earth. We might have served as a fearful example to some future people, of the pernicious consequences, and fatal effects of sin. So it is threatened to a rebellious and impenitent people:

The generation to come of the children that shall arise after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and that the whole land is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath: even all nations shall say, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers. (Deuteronomy 29: 22)

Then might have been made over us that lamentation of the prophet;

How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from the heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! the Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied; he hath thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah, he hath brought them down to the ground. The Lord was an enemy, he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces; he hath destroyed his strongholds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. (Lamentations 2: 1, 2, 5)

This might justly have been our condemnation. Is it not then an evil thing and a bitter, that we have forsaken the Lord our God? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, let us be persuaded. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, let fearfulness surprise the hypocrites thereof.

But behold the goodness as well as severity of God! And may this goodness of God lead us to repentance. He is yet giving us space to repent; he is yet waiting to be gracious to us. He has not dealt with us as our iniquities deserve; the day of grace is not over with us, nor the door of mercy shut against us. In the midst of wrath, he has remembered mercy, nor suffered the destroying angel to lay desolate the habitations of his people. O may our warmest gratitude be excited upon this occasion, and may we study what we shall render. Let our future lives be devoted, with double diligence, to the service of our gracious preserver, and our best benefactor. Let us, without any delay, repent of our past sins, with a sincere and thorough repentance; that repentance which is unto life, never to be repented of. May we fly to the mercies of God, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the great and only mediator between God and man. May we know and acknowledge the God of our fathers; may we serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.

How happy would it be, if this awful providence should be blessed by God, to the producing a universal reformation of manners, and a revival of religion among us! When the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles and professors of the primitive church, it was attended with an earthquake. So we read,

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. (Acts 4:31)

May God grant such a plentiful effusion of his Spirit, at this time, in his convincing and converting influences. May he pour out his Spirit upon his people, and his blessing upon their offspring. Soan earthquake was sanctified to the conversion of the jailor, who had Paul and Silas under his custody:

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison, were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed. and the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, do thy self no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he sat meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. (Acts 16: 25)

Could we see the people of this land, thus enquiring what they shall do to be saved, and flocking as doves unto their windows, then the Lord God of our fathers would be with us, as he was with our fathers, and never leave us nor forsake us. Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea happy is that people whose god is the Lord! We might then pray with the strongest assurances of success:

O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thy self to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh. (Psalm 60:1)

But I hasten to say,

4. What we have heard should teach us the necessity of being in a constant actual readiness for a dying hour.

A sentence of death is passed upon all. The living know that they must die. We know that thou wilt bring us to death; but we know not the time, nor the manner of our death, nor in what form the last enemy shall approach us. We know not when the master shall call for us, whether at evening, or at midnight, at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. Whenever it shall be, may our loins be girt, our lamps trimmed and burning. May we so number our days, as that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we devote all our talents to the glory of our Lord, and employ them in his service. May we be perpetually industrious in some part of that work which he has allotted us. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

When we scruple the lawfulness of any action, in which we are engaged, let us imagine how we should feel if we were surprised, in the midst of it, by an earthquake; and not dare to do anything which we suspect would then give us cause of uneasy reflection.

By thus going on in an uninterrupted course of duty, leading a holy and conscientious life, realizing our own dissolution, and habituating ourselves to the thoughts of it, we shall by degrees, with the assistance of divine grace be greatly victorious over the fears of

death, and in a constant actual readiness for its approach: nor need we be anxious as to the time, the manner, or the circumstances of it. Should we be soon alarmed, and taken away by the fatal stroke, the difficulties and temptations of life will be the sooner over, and our passage through this vale of tears of a shorter continuance. Should our attack from the last enemy be sudden, our transition will be so much the quicker and the easier, to the regions of immortal glory: should it be painful, heaven will be so much the more welcome, when we arrive there: should it be attended with the most formidable circumstances, blessed be God, we may be still secure: though the body should be crushed in an earthquake, or sink deep in the subterraneous vaults, the soul shall be caught away and tower aloft upon the pinions of guardian angels, safe and unhurt, amidst this discord of nature, this convulsion of jarring elements, the wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds. The soul and the body are indeed at present separated: but with a sure and certain hope of being again re-united, in better and more glorious circumstances, at that illustrious and tremendous day when the earth shall give up the dead that are in it.

This leads me to say,

5. And lastly, earthquakes should remind us of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the day of judgment.

They are designed to be warnings to the world, that this day of the Lord is at hand: it is near, it is near, and it hasteth greatly, when the heavens shall pass away, with a great noise:

And the elements shall melt, with fervent heat.

As a prelude to this, we read,

There shall be earthquakes in diverse places. (Matthew 24: 7)

[and]

There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21: 25)

[and]

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. (Haggai 2: 6)

Antichrist shall first be destroyed by the breath of the Lord, and by the brightness of his appearance. An earthquake shall be employed on this occasion. So it is described by John in his revelations,

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her

the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (Revelation 16: 17)

[and]

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee: and the light of a candle shall shine no more in all in thee: and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. (Revelation 18: 21)

What universal consternation and horror, will then overspread the face of this whole earth! We had a little emblem of this in that awful night, which we now commemorate: so shall the coming of the son of man be, and so shall the wicked flee, even as they fled before the earthquake.

They shall go into the caves of the earth, into the clefts of the rocks, and the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. (Isaiah 2: 19)

Thus also the vision of the prophetic evangelist:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind: and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places: and the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and the mighty men and every bond man and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6: 12)

But where can they fly for shelter and security in this awful and tremendous hour?

Thine hand, O Lord, shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out them that hate thee: thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. (Psalm 21: 8)

[and]

Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again. (Isaiah 24: 17)

Then the righteous shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; there they shall sit secure, and abide under the shadow of the almighty. From thence they shall look down

with holy triumph, behold the wonderful works of God, and view the desolations which he is making in the earth.

[and]

The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel. (Joel 3: 16)

[and]

The mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him. (Nahum 1: 5)

If we are so happy as to be of this blessed number, and have secured this God for our friend, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ; we may then look and long for this blessed hope, this glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ — we may rejoice in all the tokens of his near approach; we may lift up our heads with joy, for our redemption draweth nigh. We may be ardently desirous that this appearance of the Son of Man should be hastened. Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Then may we unite, with rapture, in that animating prayer of the prophet, with which I close:

O that thou wouldst rent the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. (Isaiah 64: 1)

F I N I S

Editorial notes.

1. Transcribed from the book in the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/divinepoweranger00byle/page/2/mode/2up> .
2. All of the Bible passages were marked at the beginning of the passage with a footnote. They have been converted to a citation in parenthesis at the end of the passage, in keeping with current practice.
3. Apparently the text was prepared for publication by an editor, who added commas or other punctuation at the end of most spoken phrases. Some of the commas have been removed for better reading.
4. The words of the text have not been altered except for correcting the spelling to accord with current usage.

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